

A New Look at The **Birth, Ministry, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

Many are confused about the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.
Can we know what year He was born, and the year, day and time
He was crucified and resurrected? Is the “Good Friday-Easter Sunday”
tradition valid? Was Christ crucified on a Wednesday or Friday?
What was the year of His birth? What was the year of His death?
And when, exactly, did He rise from the grave? Was He really
the promised Messiah, Son of David?

William F. Dankenbring

A phenomenal movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, stirred controversy and consternation throughout the world. It ostensibly depicted the last 12 hours of Christ, based on the literal gospel accounts, as they are commonly understood.

From the gripping opening scene of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane, to snapshots of the earthly ministry of Christ, His betrayal, arrest, scourging, condemnation, carrying His cross to the site of execution, and the crucifixion itself, on to the empty tomb and resurrection – it is a movie that moved and shook people up as no other has ever done.

But how much of it is based on fact? How much is correct, according to the Scriptures?

What about the birth, life and death of this mysterious man known to many as the “Christ” or the “Messiah”?

There is far, far more to this story than one epic film could ever portray. Let’s take an earnest, penetrating look into the birth, life, passion, death and resurrection of the One called Christ, the Messiah, by some, and a false prophet, misleader and seducer, by others.

The Birth of Christ

When was Jesus Christ born? What was the year – and the most likely month – of His birth? These questions have been argued about for centuries, and even today there is great disagreement over them. One scholar, Earnest Martin, said Christ was born in 3 B.C., in the fall of the year. He claims Christ began preaching when He was thirty years of age, and claims that the beginning of His ministry was in the spring of 28 A.D. Yet Martin says Christ was crucified in 30 A.D. at the Passover. This leaves only time for a ministry of two short years! Was Christ’s ministry only two years long?

What is the truth? Let us carefully investigate these problems and paradoxes, and see what we can learn.

The Scriptures show us that Jesus Christ was born “in the days of *Herod the king*” (Matt.2:1). Herod was so fixated on the fact that wise men from the East queried him about a child born to be “King of the Jews,” that he pretended that he, too, desired to worship him (Matt.2:7-8). The wise men were warned not to return to Herod, and departed into their own country, and Joseph and Mary took Jesus and fled to Egypt.

When the wise men did not inform Herod of where the prophesied King was, Herod “was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men” (verse 16).

Jesus, then, had to be born before the death of Herod the Great. The gospel of Luke confirms this fact. Luke recorded, “There was *in the days of Herod*, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zecharias” (Luke 1:5). During this time, the gospel continues, John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ were born.

Thus Jesus was already born when Herod was still alive. But when did Herod die? Says the *Critical-Experimental Commentary*:

“As Herod is known to have died in the year of Rome 750, in the *fourth year before the commencement of our Christian era*, the BIRTH OF CHRIST MUST BE DATED FOUR YEARS BEFORE THE DATE USUALLY ASSIGNED TO IT, *even if He were born within the year of Herod’s death*, as it is next to certain that he was”
(Commentary on Matt.2:1-12).

Hastings Bible Dictionary also points out “Herod called the great . . . He died B.C. 4” (“Herod,” vol.2, p.353). Says *The New Bible Dictionary*, “Herod the Great, king of the Jews 40-4 BC: (“Herod,” p.521).

The year Herod died there was an eclipse. Josephus records, during Herod’s final year, that at the time he slew the high priest Matthias, “that very night there was an eclipse of the moon” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVII, VI, 4). Says the editor, William Whiston, in a footnote:

“This eclipse of the moon (which is the only eclipse mentioned by Josephus) is of the greatest consequence for the determination of the time for the death of Herod Antipater, *and for the birth and entire chronology of Jesus Christ*. It happened March 13th, in the year of the Julian period 4710, and *the 4th year before the Christian era*” (*ibid.*, p.365).

Thus Jesus was at least born before the spring of 4 B.C. But what time of year was He born? There is much conjecture on this subject, but there are enough clues in the gospel accounts and history to give us a very good idea.

Zacharias and the “Course of Abijah”

The actual day of the birth of Christ is not known for certain, but we can know the approximate time of year when He was born. In the book of Luke we read that the father of John the Baptist was Zacharias, and he was a priest who served at the temple in Jerusalem. He was “of the course of Abia” (Luke 1:5). While serving at the temple, he was informed by an angel that his wife was to have a son, who was to be named John. After this, Zacharias finished the days of his ministrations, and departed to his own house (v.23). “And after those days, his wife Elizabeth conceived . . .” (v.24).

The names of the different courses of priests that served at the Temple are given in I Chronicles 24:1-19. “Abia” or “Abijah” was the EIGHTH course. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, each one of these courses served at the Temple for *one week*, the first course serving the first week of Nisan, in the spring (compare I Chron.27:1-2), and then each course in its own order. All the priests served during the annual festivals (Passover in spring, Pentecost, and then Tabernacles in the fall). After six months, the order would be repeated, thus each course would serve two weeks during a year.

The course of Abijah, then, would have served the eighth week in the rotation. The eighth week from Nisan 1, leaving out the week of Passover, when all the priests served, would have been IYAR 27 TO SIVAN 5, the day just before Pentecost, which generally fell on Sivan 6. His service would have fallen about late May or early June. After serving a week in the Temple, Zacharias would have remained another week in Jerusalem, because of the Feast of Shavuot or Pentecost that week. That is one possibility.

However, the courses of the priesthood served two times during the year. The second round of serving began Tishri 1, the beginning of the second six months. The second period of service for the course of Abijah, therefore, would have been approximately the first week of Kislev, corresponding to our November-December.

Zacharias would have returned home shortly after one of these two periods of service, and his wife then conceived. This would have been either about the middle of June or early December. If we add nine months to this date, the normal time for the gestation of a human baby in the womb, John the Baptist would have been born either about the middle of March, in the spring, shortly before the Passover – or about the first of September.

Jesus was conceived about six months after John (Luke 1:24-31, especially verse 26). This would suggest that Jesus Christ was born six months after John. So Christ would have been born about the middle of September – OR the end of February-first of March.

Can we know which possibility is the likely one?

There is a strong hint. Luke tells us Christ was “about thirty years of age” when He was baptized (Luke 3:23; John 1:29-32). Right after His baptism, He was led into the desert fasting for 40 days (Luke 4:1-4). Shortly after this, the Passover arrived (John 2:13).

These facts imply that He was baptized at least more than 40 days before Passover, 4 B.C. The expression “about thirty” actually implies He was at least thirty, or just over thirty – in His thirtieth year – when He was baptized. Ireneus says, of this passage, “Being thirty years old when He came to be baptized” (*Against Heresies*, 2, xxii, 4).

If He was born about 60 days before Passover, then that would place His birth in the latter part of the month of February. This is very likely for the following reasons:

First, He had to be born before Herod died, and Herod died before Passover, just a few weeks after the beginning of spring (which begins at the spring equinox). Yet after Christ was born, several things happened. Eight days later He was circumcised (Luke 2:21), and Mary fulfilled her *forty days* of purification (Luke 2:21-22), and He was as a young firstborn male dedicated to the Lord (Lk.2:23-24). During this time, probably, the wise men visited him, while living in a house, when he was “a young child” (Matt.2:9-11). Immediately after this, Joseph and his family fled to Egypt (Matt.2:13-15). Herod, at this time, killed all the young children in Jerusalem (vs.16-18). After this Herod died, before Passover. This period of at least 40-60 days could not have begun *during* the spring of 4 B.C., because March 21 is the first day of spring, and His birth had to occur before March arrived to allow for all the events that transpired before Herod’s death.

It is impossible to fit all these events into the short time of spring in 4 B.C., just before Herod died. Shepherds were abiding in the fields at night, when Christ was born (Luke 2:8), These were the shepherds who guarded the temple flocks near Bethlehem. They did abide in the fields before spring. Spring begins March 21st, with the equinox. Christ’s birth had to occur at least 40 days before the death of Herod, which was just before Passover, and Herod had to have time to kill the innocents in Bethlehem after Joseph’s family fled to Egypt! All this probably took some 50-60 days, pushing the birth of Christ to about a month before spring! This would push the birth of Christ to sometime in February (see our article, “When Was Jesus Born?”).

If this is the case, and since Jesus was “about thirty” when He was baptized and began His ministry, this means He began His ministry in the year 27 A.D. That year He would have turned 30 in the month of February!

30 years old
 -4 B.C. (year of birth)
 26 A.D.
 +1 (no year zero)
 27 A.D. (year ministry began)

The Prophesied Date of the Messiah

Does this date figure into Old Testament prophecy regarding the coming of the Messiah?

Absolutely, yes! Notice the amazing prophecy in Daniel, chapter 9, the “seventy weeks prophecy.” This astounding prophecy predicted the very year the Messiah would come.

In Daniel we read in the Septuagint version of the Scriptures:

“Seventy weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin to be ended, and to seal up transgressions, and to blot out the iniquities, and to make atonement for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy.

“And thou shalt know and understand, that from the going forth of the command for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem *UNTIL CHRIST THE PRINCE there shall be seven weeks, and sixty two weeks:* and then the time shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall, and the times shall be exhausted.

“And after the sixty two weeks, the ANOINTED ONE [Christ] shall be destroyed [Heb., ‘cut off’], and there is no judgment in him . . .” (Dan.9:24-26).

Now notice! A day is a year in being fulfilled in terms of Biblical prophecy (see Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4-6). Seventy weeks equals 70 sevens, or $70 \times 7 = 490$ days or years in total complete fulfillment. However, only 7 weeks and 62 weeks were to pass until the coming of “CHRIST THE PRINCE”! This means that we multiply 69 weeks by 7 days per week and come up with 483 days or *years* to the coming of the Messiah.

Notice again. This period of time of the prophecy is to be counted from “the going forth of the command” for the building of Jerusalem! Daniel was given this prophecy in 538 B.C., the first year of Darius, king of the Medes (Daniel 9:1-2).

Three decrees were made by Persian kings regarding the building of Jerusalem and the Temple. The first was by Cyrus, in 537 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-4). But 483 years later would bring us to 54 B.C. Nothing significant occurred on that year at all. The next decree was that of Darius in 520 B.C. (Ezra 6:1-11). If we subtract 483 from 520, we come to the year 37 B.C. Nothing of any importance concerning a Messiah appearing occurred that year either. No Messiah is reported to have come at either of those two times! But notice! We read in Ezra these words:

“And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, *and Artaxerxes king of Persia*” (Ezra 6:14).

What about this third decree, the commandment that went forth from king Artaxerxes? Artaxerxes also made a decree concerning the rebuilding and refurbishing of Jerusalem, recorded in Ezra, chapter 7. In the seventh year of his reign, he sent Ezra the scribe up to Jerusalem with a copy of his decree (Ezra 7:7, 12-28). *This was in 457 B.C. If we count 483 years from 457 B.C., we come to the year of 27 A.D*

483 years (69 weeks X 7 days)
 457 B.C. (Artaxerxes' decree)
 26 A.D.
 +1 (no year zero)
 27 A.D. (prophesied year of appearance of Messiah)

What occurred in 27 A.D.? That is the very year Jesus Christ revealed Himself to the Jews and began His ministry! In 27 A.D., as we have seen, Jesus Christ would have been “about thirty” (Luke 3:23) – that is, over thirty, or in His thirtieth year. Thus this prophecy validates His birth in 4 B.C., as He would have been “about thirty” in 27 A.D. The age of thirty is the proper age for a man to begin service as a priest or take up duties as a Levite (Numbers 4-5). Christ, then, as our High Priest, had to be thirty years of age to begin His ministry. He had just turned 30 about a month or two prior to Passover in 27 A.D., when He began His ministry (John 2:13-22). It all fits together like the pieces of an amazing, incredible jigsaw puzzle!

The Length of Christ’s Ministry

Jesus’ ministry began in 27 A.D., about the time of the Passover. How long did it last, before He was killed? Some say three and one half years; others claim He preached one year, and others, like Martin say His ministry lasted only two years. One teacher even says His ministry was “70 weeks” in length. These ideas are mere guesses, unsupported by the evidence! But what is the truth?

Jesus’ ministry began after His baptism, by John the Baptist, when the Holy Spirit came upon Him in a special way. It began some 40 days later, after He fasted for forty days, in the wilderness, and defeated Satan the devil. We read in Luke, chapter 3:

“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, *and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him*, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age . . .” (Luke 3:21-23).

Jesus, of course, was literally begotten of the Holy Spirit at His conception (Matt.1:20-21; Luke 1:35). As He grew up as a boy, He “waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). What then is meant by the Holy Spirit coming upon Him at His baptism? This can only refer to the Holy Spirit *anointing* Him to begin His ministry, and to begin preaching the gospel, the purpose for which He was sent!

Since Christ was born about February, in 4 B.C., He would have been “about thirty years of age” in spring of A.D. 27. Thus He was baptized before Passover in A.D. 27, and “anointed” for His ministry at that time. At this point, Jesus went up to the wilderness, and fasted forty days, and was tempted of the devil (Luke 4:1-13, Matt.4:1-11). This was special preparation for His ministry. After this, he departed into Galilee, and dwelt in Capernaum (Matt.4:12-13), and began to preach the gospel.

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt.4:17).

This was after John was put into prison (Mark 1:14-15). Luke tells us further:

“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being

glorified of all” (Luke 4:14).

The First Passover of Jesus’ Ministry

Jesus had already begun healing the sick miraculously, and casting out demons. He established a reputation with His preaching and miracles throughout the region of Galilee. At the Passover, that year, 27 A.D., He went up to Jerusalem. John records:

“And the Jews’ *passover* was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem” (John 2:13).

At Jerusalem, Jesus found the temple of God polluted by those who sold doves and oxen and sheep for sacrifices, and a host of moneychangers. Angered, He made a scourge of small cords, and drove out all the animals and their sellers, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers (John 2:14-17). *This first Passover* would have been in the spring of 27 A.D., shortly after His ministry got started.

At this Passover, Jesus was asked, “What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?” (John 2:18). Jesus answered: “Destroy this temple, and in *three days* I will raise it up” (v.19). What did Jesus mean? First, we know He was literally in the grave for three days. However, using a day for a year principle, He also implied that *three years* from that time, or three Passovers hence, He would be killed, and resurrected!

Three years! In other words, this statement is further evidence that Jesus’ ministry lasted not one year, or 70 weeks, or two years, or 3 ½ years, but *three years!*

Notice what follows: “Then said the Jews, *Forty and six years* was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body” (John 2:20-21). So not only did His ministry last three years, from the time He spoke to them, but when He was crucified, He was resurrected after three *literal* days.

The Temple of Herod

When did Herod begin construction on the Temple? This statement was made at Passover 27 A.D. If we subtract the 46 years the Temple was in building, 46-27 = 19 B.C.; but since there is no year zero, we must add 1 year, bringing us to 20 B.C. Did Herod begin his massive reconstruction project on the Temple in 20 B.C.?

Says *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels*, “According to secular history, Herod initiated the work sometime in 20 B.C. or 19 B.C. This statement was addressed to Jesus at the *first passover* after he begins his public ministry. The ‘forty six years’ therefore furnishes *another means for identifying the year when his ministry began*” (p.317). The authors continue, “Hence the first passover of Jesus’ ministry must have been in the spring of A.D. 27” (*ibid.*). Schurer in *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ* adds, “The rebuilding was begun in the eighteenth year of Herod, corresponding to B.C. 20-19 . . .” (vol.1, p.438).

The *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* concurs, saying, “. . . though Herod began the rebuilding B.C. 20, as a whole it was literally true that the temple was ‘built in forty and six years,’ when

the Jews so asserted to Jesus (John 2:20). But the end was not yet, for the work was really continued until A.D. 64, just six years before the final destruction of the temple by the Roman soldiers of Titus” (“Herod,” p.471).

Counting 46 years, then, from 20 B.C., brings us to 26 A.D. by simple subtraction. But, since there was no year zero, we again must add a year – bringing us to A.D. 27 – the very year Jesus Christ began His ministry, and celebrated the first Passover of His ministry! The evidence of the dating of Herod’s Temple fits the puzzle perfectly, confirming the time of Jesus’ birth, and age when He began His ministry.

Pentecost Proclamation

Luke tells us further: “And He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the SABBATH DAY, and stood up for to read” (Luke 4:14-16).

The Greek word for sabbath here is actually the plural *sabbaton*, and literally means “Sabbaths” or “weeks.” This may have been the “day of weeks,” or most likely the Feast of Shavuot, or Pentecost! Thus we see that Christ began His ministry in the spring of the year, in 27 A.D. As He addressed the worshippers in the synagogue, we read in Luke’s account:

“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:17-22).

His own hometown folks didn’t believe in Him. He replied to them, “Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country . . . No prophet is accepted in his own country” (v.24).

The Second, Third and Fourth Passovers of Jesus’ Ministry

The *second Passover* of Jesus’ ministry, in 28 A.D., is possibly mentioned at the end of the second chapter of John’s gospel. By this Passover Feast, Jesus had already developed a well-established reputation as a doer of miracles and wondrous deeds. The brief account is as follows:

“Now when he was in Jerusalem *at the passover*, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (John 2:23-25).

On the other hand, some may think that this refers to the first Passover of His ministry, since the passage immediately follows the reference to that Passover earlier in the chapter. If that is the case, then very likely the second Passover is another feast mentioned in John, chapter 5.

“Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews” (John 5:1, NIV).

The *third Passover* of Jesus’ ministry is mentioned several chapters later in the gospel account of John. This would be the Passover of 29 A.D. John declares:

“And the *passover*, a feast of the Jews, was nigh” (John 6:4).

The final and *fourth Passover* was the Passover of 30 A.D., at which Jesus was crucified. This is the Passover which culminated Christ’s ministry, showing that His ministry lasted a period of three years. We read of the events of this Passover, beginning in chapter 11 of the book of John:

“And the Jews’ *passover* was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the *passover*, to purify themselves” (John 11:55).

“Then Jesus six days before *passover* came to Bethany . . .” (John 12:1).

“Now before the feast of the *passover*, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

“And it was the *preparation of the passover*, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!” (John 19:14).

Jesus’ ministry therefore began about Passover time, in 27 A.D., and ended, then, at Passover, 30 A.D., with His being slain and killed as our Passover lamb, as the apostle Paul wrote: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even *Christ our passover* is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Cor.5:7-8).

This evidence proves that Jesus’ ministry was not just one and one half years, or two and one half years, or even three and one half years, which is another common theory. The evidence shows that Christ’s ministry was THREE YEARS IN LENGTH! Interestingly, “three” is God’s number of “decision,” the number of “finality.” Time and time again, the number 3 appears in Scripture, and is connected with God in a very special way. Says E. W. Bullinger, “Three is the symbol of the cube, or solid contents. Three, therefore, stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire” (*Number in Scripture*, page 107).

The number three is the number of finality, and of decision. Peter denied Christ three times (Luke 22:34, 61). Later Jesus asked him three times, “Do you love me?” (John 21:15-17), and told him three times, “Feed my sheep.” Paul besought God three times to heal him of a thorn in the flesh (II Cor.12:8-9). Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave

(Matt.12:40). His ministry lasted three years, and He spent three years teaching the disciples. Later, Paul, as an apostle, said he also saw Christ and was taught by him: “And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (I Cor.15:8). He also was taught of Christ “three years” – in the wilderness of Arabia (see Gal.1:15-18). Thus the number three is very significant with God. It is clearly the correct length of Christ's ministry. Jesus began preaching in spring of 27 A.D. and was crucified in spring of 30 A.D. – three years later.

It is only fitting, therefore, that Christ’s ministry would be three years long! This fits perfectly like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, into the Biblical picture.

Some say He was crucified in 31 A.D. However, this would make His ministry four years in length. Furthermore, it would destroy the relationship between the year of His crucifixion and the year of the destruction of the Temple, in 70 A.D.

It is significant that there were exactly *forty years* from the death of Christ in A.D. 30 till the conquest and overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus and Vespasian in 70 A.D.! Forty is God's perfect number denoting trials and trouble and tribulation. Jesus was tried and tested of the devil while fasting 40 days (Matt.4:1-2; Luke 4:1-2). Israel wandered in the wilderness for *forty years* (Num.14:34). And there were 40 years from the death of Christ till the downfall of Jerusalem, which He Himself prophesied (Matt.23:36-38; Luke 23:28-31).

The number “forty” is the number “associated with probation, trial, and chastisement,” says E. W. Bullinger (p.266).

Therefore, when all the evidence is pieced together carefully, we come up with the following picture. Notice!

Born – 4 B.C.

Ministry – began February, A.D. 27, when 30 years old

Ministry lasted 3 years

Crucified – April, Passover, 30 A.D.

Destruction of Temple – A.D. 70, 40 years later, after a period of trial, chastisement, probation

The Crucifixion and Death of Christ

When was Jesus Christ nailed to the stake outside Jerusalem? What was the date and time of His death? And when was He resurrected? Was He crucified on Good Friday and resurrected early Sunday morning, like the Roman Catholic Church and mainstream Protestantism believe and teach? There is probably as much confusion and controversy over the date and time of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, even among those who believe He was resurrected, as there is concerning any other subject in the New Testament!

What is the *real* truth? In the book of Matthew, we discover that Jesus said He would be in the grave three days and three nights (Matt.12:40). What does this do to the commonly believed Friday crucifixion theory?

If Jesus Christ were buried just before sunset on Friday, and arose at sunrise on Sunday, and if these two events coincided with approximately 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM, to keep it simple, then the total length of time Christ would have been buried in the tomb would have been Friday night (12 hours), Saturday day (12 hours), and Saturday night (12 hours) – or a total of 36 hours – *just one half of three full days and nights!* Or, to put it another way – if we count a portion of Friday (day), Friday night, Saturday (day), and Saturday night, and Jesus then arose – we have counted for only *two days and two nights!* *NOT three days and three nights!*

Some might argue that Jesus arose at the rising of the sun, so we must include Sunday in our count, even if it is only a few minutes. Well, that would still only include *parts of three days and still only TWO nights!* Yet the gospel of Matthew PLAINLY declares He would be in the “heart of the earth” – that is, the tomb – three days AND three nights! But to suggest that we should include Sunday morning itself also fails to fit the facts, because we read in John’s gospel: “Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, *while it was still DARK*, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb” (John 20:1). Since it was still dark, and Jesus had already arisen, then this occurred BEFORE SUNRISE! Therefore the problem with the Friday crucifixion-Sunday resurrection still remains! It does not allow enough time to fulfill the stated length of time Messiah would be in the grave!

And, Jesus Himself declared, “The Scripture CANNOT be broken” (John 10:35). He asseverated, “Thy Word is TRUTH” (John 17:17). Paul wrote: “ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim.3:16). Therefore the words of Matthew dare not be disregarded! The sum total of the evidence DISPROVES the Friday crucifixion-Sunday resurrection theory!

Some will protest, saying that the day of the crucifixion was called the “Preparation day,” meaning the preparation of the weekly Sabbath, and therefore the crucifixion had to occur on a Friday. Indeed, the day of the crucifixion was a “Preparation day” – the apostle John says of the day Jesus was crucified, “Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (*for that Sabbath was a high day*), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away” (John 19:31). The Sabbath in question here was the *annual Sabbath of the Passover – a “high day”* – not the weekly Sabbath day!

Clearly, all the Biblical evidence disproves the Friday crucifixion theory! But does this necessarily mean that the proposed alternate theory – that of a Wednesday crucifixion – is automatically correct? Or could this theory also be proven to be in error?

The Wednesday Crucifixion Theory

Sometimes people think they are in an “either-or” situation, that “either this” must be true, “or that” must be the case – when neither theory will fit all the facts!

What are the basic underlying problems with the Wednesday crucifixion theory?

Many have attempted to “prove” the crucifixion occurred on a Wednesday, “in the midst of the week,” by pointing to a prophecy found in Daniel 9:27, where we read: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the *middle of the week* he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” It is claimed by some Christian apologists that this refers to Christ, and proves He died in the “MIDDLE of the week” – that is, Wednesday.

However, this is a prime case of reading into a text one’s own preconceived opinions. If we simply allow the text to speak for itself, in context, we discover it is talking about a “prince” or world leader who is prophesied to come and to destroy God’s temple – “the city and the sanctuary” (Dan.9:26). This occurred in 70 A.D., when the Romans fought the Jews, conquered them, and destroyed the Temple. The next verse then goes on to say, “Then he [the prince] shall confirm a covenant [treaty] . . . But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering” (v.27). Verse 27 follows verse 26 in time sequence. Therefore, the WAR had to occur first. Yet Jesus was crucified 40 years BEFORE the Jewish-Roman war! This passage therefore could not refer to His death at all and certainly cannot be used as “proof” He died in the middle of the week! Whenever He died, sacrifice and offerings did not stop then – they were performed daily for the next 40 years, until the Romans burned down the Temple in 70 A.D.!

A major difficulty with the Wednesday theory, however, is the gospel of Luke. Luke tells us of two disciples who were traveling to Emmaus that Sunday, the first day of the week, following the resurrection. Jesus joined up with them, incognito, His identity hidden, as He conversed with them.

We read, “Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’ Then the one who was Cleopas answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?’ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ So they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, *today is the THIRD DAY since all these things happened*” (Luke 24:13-21).

Notice! It was Sunday, and these two disciples said it was “THE THIRD DAY since all these things happened”! Now if we count from Wednesday, when Jesus was crucified on the stake, we have – Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday – FOUR DAYS it would have been “since these things were done”!

A Hebrew Idiom

Let’s take a closer look at the expression “three days and three nights.” Many have pointed out that this is an idiom and can mean *parts* of three days and nights. In other words, idiomatically speaking, all we really need to fulfill this expression is a sequential, consecutive

period of time including at least parts of three days and three nights.

Notice the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Critical Experimental Commentary*:

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly (Jon.1:17), so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. This was the second public pronouncement of His resurrection three days after His death. . . . Jonah’s case was analogous to this, as being a signal judgment of God; reversed in three days; and followed by a glorious mission to the Gentiles. The expression ‘in the heart of the earth’ suggested by the expression of Jonah with respect to the sea (2:3 in LXX), means simply the grave, but this considered as the most emphatic expression of real and total entombment. The period during which He was to lie in the grave is here expressed in round numbers, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which was to regard ANY PART OF A DAY, HOWEVER SMALL, INCLUDED WITHIN A PERIOD OF DAYS, AS A FULL DAY. (See I Sam. 30:12, 13; Esth.4:16; v.1; Matt.27:63, 64, etc.)” (vol.3, page 75).

Notice how this fits in with the book of Esther, in the Old Testament. Esther sent a message to Mordecai saying, “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for THREE DAYS, NIGHT OR DAY. My maids and I will fast likewise. And I will go to the king . . .” (Esther 4:16). “Now it happened *on the THIRD DAY* that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court . . .” (Esther 5:1).

It seems clear that the expression three days and three nights can include partial days or nights. In this case, during the “third day” of the fast, Esther appeared before the king. The fast probably began in the evening, and so included three evenings, two days, and a part of the third day, when she appeared before the king.

In another case, we read of a case where a young man was found in a field and brought to king David. He was famished and very weak. The account says that “he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights” (I Sam.30:11-12). When David questioned him, he told him, “I am a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind, because *three days ago* I fell sick” (v.13).

Three days could mean portions of three days, and the same reasoning applies to “three nights.” I see no reason why we must conclude that “three days and three nights” means an entire 72 hours, or three 24-hour periods of time. To say such a thing is not to *prove* it!

In other words, Hebrew is much like English in this regard. Three days is a general term and can mean parts of three consecutive days. Even so, three nights can mean parts of three consecutive nights – as “three nights from now.” If a person wants to say a precise length of time, they would say “exactly” three days or nights – or, “precisely.”

Even so, the expression “three days and three nights” can mean parts of three days and parts of three nights, so long as they are in succession.

So, then, what is the solution to the puzzle? What day DID Jesus die on the stake? When was the Passover in the year He died? Before getting to those questions, let’s examine the *time*

of His resurrection, for it bears heavily on this matter.

When Was the Resurrection?

Notice the following text in the gospel of Matthew:

“In the *END OF THE SABBATH*, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher” (Matt.28:1).

This verse has become the focus of much attention recently. It has been seriously misunderstood and misinterpreted by modern religionists and students of the Greek language. Let us notice it carefully. One booklet claims that this verse proves Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb of Jesus Saturday night, because – they claim – the Greek expression for “end of the Sabbath” means the latter portion of the sabbath, as the day is closing. They claim that the word translated “dawn” here merely means “beginning” of the first day of the week, which would have begun at sunset, Saturday evening, according to Hebrew reckoning.

The word for “end” here, in the expression “end of the sabbath,” is *opse* and can mean “late in the day,” but also, by extension, “after the close of the day,” and “in the end.” Therefore, although this verse could indicate that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to visit the tomb of Jesus late in the day of the weekly Sabbath, it can also mean “after the close of the Sabbath.” *Which is it?*

Thayers Greek-English Lexicon defines this word as: “adverb of time, *after a long time, long after, late*; a) esp. *late in the day . . . i.e., at evening . . . the sabbath having passed, after the sabbath, i.e. at the early dawn of the first day of the week . . .*”

Notice! *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* shows that this word can be used of the latter part of a day, or of a period of time AFTER a particular day. But when, then, did Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to Jesus’ tomb after the ending of the Sabbath day? Was it immediately after, as it was growing very dark, or was it early the next morning?

The Greek word for “dawn” used in Matthew 28:1 in the King James Version holds the key to understanding this matter. The Greek word for “dawn” in this verse is *epiphosko*. Says *Strong's Concordance*, #2020, “*epiphosko*. to begin to grow light.” Says *Thayer's Lexicon*, “*to grow light, to dawn*.” It is derived from *epiphaino*, which means “to shine upon, i.e. become (literally) visible or (figuratively) known – appear, give light.”

The major definition of this word suggests that the literal, visible DAWNING of a new day, when the eastern sky *begins* to grow light, is the actual time when Mary and the other Mary went to the tomb. They had prepared spices, and were planning to spend some time there, anointing the body of Jesus. All this suggests that early dawn was the correct time – not the brief time of twilight, between sunset and nightfall.

How clear it should be, then, that the visit to the tomb occurred before sunrise Sunday morning. John’s gospel makes it perfectly clear. We read:

“The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene *early*, *WHILE IT WAS YET DARK*, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the Sepulchre” (John 20:1).

The gospel of Luke gives us a fuller account of the actual events that occurred, in time sequence. Luke writes:

“And this man [Joseph of Arimathaea] went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never before man was laid. And that day [Nisan 14] was the preparation, and the sabbath [the high holy day of Nisan 15] drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, AND PREPARED SPICES AND OINTMENTS . . .” (Luke 23:52-56).

The New King James Version has:

“And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment” (vs.55-56).

This must have taken some time. They may have already had the spices, but still had to prepare them for use. They would most likely have done this in the short time they had between the burial of Christ and the onset of the annual Sabbath, at sunset, Nisan 15, on which “no servile work could be done.” This Sabbath was the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

Luke then continues the story, as follows:

“Now on the first day of the week, *very early in the morning*, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!’” (Luke 24:1-6).

Notice! Luke tells us the women visited the tomb “*very early in the MORNING*” (Luke 24:1). This was comparable to the time when Jesus arose “in the morning, rising up a great while before day, departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). It was still dark outside – this was before daybreak, or sunrise! This would not have been the closing hours of the weekly Sabbath. Nor would it have been the first few hours of nightfall, Saturday night. This would have been EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, *BEFORE THE RISING OF THE SUN!*

What did Mary Magdalene and the other Mary find when they got to the tomb? As we have seen, this visit occurred before sunrise, while it was *yet dark*. Notice!

“In the end of the sabbath [or, after the close of the sabbath], as it began to dawn

toward the first day of the week [that is, before sunrise, while it was yet dark], came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the tomb.

“And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which is crucified. *HE IS NOT HERE: FOR HE IS RISEN, AS HE SAID.* Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that *HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD*; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you” (Matt.28:2-7).

Here it is! The Sabbath had passed. It is *after* the Sabbath, now. In God’s calendar, each day begins at sunset, and is counted “from even to even” (Lev.23:32). It is still dark outside, and Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb. And what do they find?

Jesus has ALREADY RISEN FROM THE DEAD! He is not there! Sunrise has not yet occurred, and Jesus is already out of the tomb! The angel informs them, “He IS RISEN” – past tense -- not “He is rising,” but, “He IS [already] RISEN”! *And this is BEFORE SUNRISE!*

“Two Sabbaths”

Interestingly, the *Interlinear Bible* translates this passage, literally from the Greek, this way:

“But AFTER THE SABBATHS, at the dawning into the first of the Sabbaths [week], came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to view the grave” (v.1)).

The Greek word for “Sabbath” in this verse is in the PLURAL – *Sabbaton* – and the Interlinear Bible expresses it in the plural. Why? Because there were two back-to-back Sabbaths that week – Friday, the annual Sabbath, and Saturday, the weekly Sabbath!

The fact that annual holy days were also called Sabbaths is very evident from Leviticus 23:32 where God says of the Day of Atonement, “from evening to evening you shall celebrate your Sabbath.” Also, speaking of the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and Shemini Atzeret, “The Eighth Day,” God calls them “a Sabbath of rest,” and “Sabbath-rest” (verse 39). The Feast of Trumpets, another holy day, is also expressly called a “Sabbath” (Lev.23:24).

The fact that both Friday and the weekly Sabbath were BOTH “Sabbaths” then is expressly revealed in Matthew 28:1. (The word “Sabbaton” in Greek is a plural word, but it can also refer to the weekly Sabbath, and to the “week” itself, and is sometimes translated that way.)

The expression “at the dawning into the first of the Sabbaths” could also mean the beginning of the week, or even the “weeks” – plural – of the Omer count. The “Omer” – the first-fruits offering of the barley harvest – is a period of seven weeks which are counted from Passover to Pentecost. The counting begins with the wave sheaf offering on Nisan 16, which was the weekly Sabbath day that year.

When Was the Resurrection?

Was the resurrection, then, shortly before sunrise, Sunday morning? John's gospel says it was still "dark" when the women came to the tomb. But Mark seems to contradict these facts. The King James Version has it: "And when the sabbath was past [that part is perfectly clear], Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. *And very early in the morning, on the first day of the week [so good so far!], they came unto the sepulchre at the RISING OF THE SUN*" (Mark 16:1-2).

Does this account contradict the other accounts? Not at all!

The Scriptures do not contradict themselves. The word translated "*at the rising of the sun*" in this verse is *panatela*, meaning "to cause to rise," "make rise," etc. The prefix is *Ana* in the Greek and could be translated "by" or "before." In other words, the women came to the tomb "by the rising of the sun," or "*before* the rising of the sun." This would fit in with the clear statement in John that they came while it was still dark, before daybreak.

To determine the time of the resurrection, it is very noteworthy that when Christ died on the stake, there was an accompanying earthquake – "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks split" (Matt.27:51). There was another earthquake early Sunday morning, before sunrise, as Matthew continues: "Now after the Sabbath [or "Sabbaths"], as the first day of the week began to dawn [not yet sunrise], Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a GREAT EARTHQUAKE; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone, and sat on it" (Matt.28:1-2, NKJV).

It seems most likely that the resurrection of Christ occurred *at the moment of this great earthquake!* The dead will once again rise when there is a great earthquake, at the second coming of Christ (Rev.11:18-19; 16:17-21; 11:12-13). When Christ arose, a number of saints, also in their graves, also were resurrected, and entered Jerusalem and appeared to many (Matt.27:52-53). An earthquake is often associated with resurrection! Evidently, then, when the earth quaked at the coming of the angel to roll away the stone from the tomb is the very moment of Christ's resurrection!

Tremendous NEW EVIDENCE!

So when did Jesus DIE? What was the day of the week when He was crucified?

The whole question can be settled, once and for all, by the knowledge of astronomy and the Jewish calendar. Rabbis admit that in the time of the second Temple, the Jewish calendar was regulated by the moon. That is, each month began when a "new moon" crescent was sighted by appropriate observers, and then certified by the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court). Writes Arthur Spier in his book *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar*:

"In the early times of our history the solution was found by the following practical procedure: *The beginnings of months were determined by direct observation of*

the new moon. Then those beginnings of the months (Rosh Hodesh) were sanctified and announced by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified that they had seen the new crescent and after their testimony had been thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation, and duly accepted” (p.1).

Astronomical tables and calculations today can give us the time and occurrence of every “new moon” as it would have been seen from Jerusalem (or other major cities) backwards in time for centuries and millennia.

The Swift Guide to the Galaxy, a software program for computers, under “Lunar Calendar,” provides such a program. For the first month of Nisan or Abib, 30 A.D., it gives a calendar showing all the moon’s phases, as seen from Jerusalem, for every day of the month.

In A.D. 30, for the month of March, the molad or conjunction of the New Moon occurred on Wednesday, March 22. The crescent New Moon was seen in the evening of Thursday, March 23, making Abib 1 Friday, March 24. Therefore, in A.D. 30, the 15th day of Abib – the First Day of Unleavened Bread – was *Friday, April 7th!*

This means that in 30 A.D. the day of the Passover sacrifice, Abib 14, was NOT ON WEDNESDAY, BUT RATHER ON THURSDAY, April 6th!! In other words, the date of the crucifixion was THURSDAY, APRIL 6TH, 30 A.D.!

Corroborating this witness, Dr. Monzur Ahmed, author of the “mooncalc” software program, was contacted by Nick Wood in England. Dr. Ahmed sent him the dates and times of all the lunar conjunctions for the years 29, 30, and 31 A.D. These figures agreed with his own software “COSMI Guide to the Galaxy,” which show the positions of all the heavenly bodies, including the Sun and Moon, for any given day or hour, all the way back to way before 1 BC.

There is a website devoted to the Phases of the Moon, called *Obliquity*. You can go on their website and obtain the New Moon conjunction data – time and date for the New Moons for the year 30 A.D., especially March (which New Moon would correspond with the Hebrew month Nisan or Abib). Just go to <http://www.obliquity.com/cgi-bin/lunar.cgi?Year=30&Month=3>. You will find that the conjunction of the Nisan New Moon was on March 22, at 17:29 GMT. This would have been 19:29 Jerusalem time (the Jerusalem time zone is two hours before GMT). 19:29 would have been 7:29 PM, Wednesday evening. Since Hebrew days begin at sunset, this would have been the beginning of the next day by Hebrew reckoning. Thus the first sighting of the new crescent would have most likely been Thursday evening, around sunset, about 22 ½ hours later. Thus would mean that Friday, March 24th (beginning Thursday evening) would have been the first day of the New Moon/Month of Nisan/Abib. This means the 14th day of the month – the day the Passover was killed – would have been Thursday, April 6th, and Friday, April 7th was the annual holy day (First Day of Unleavened Bread).

Jack Finegan in *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* says absolute astronomical evidence proves the crucifixion date could not have been on a Wednesday for the years A.D. 29 to A.D. 33. He points out *April 25 could NOT have been a possible date in 31 A.D. because it would involve an extra lunar month, and the barley would have been ready to begin harvesting much sooner, by March 27th.* (If the previous winter had been long and cold, the necessary barley

sheaves could have also been obtained from the region of Jericho. Passover in 31 A.D. (Nisan 14) would have been on March 27, which would not have fallen on a Wednesday, but on a Tuesday. This of course completely contradicts the evidence of the Passover on the year Christ was killed!

Astronomical Tables

In the scholarly, scientific book *Astronomical Tables of the Sun, Moon and Planets* by astronomer Jean Meeus (second edition, published by Willmann-Bell, Inc., PO Box 35025, Richmond, Virginia 23235), part four deals with the “Phases of the Moon.” This remarkable work provides tables by which readers can theoretically compute the phases of the moon, including the New Moons (molads) with an accuracy within *10 minutes or less*, for any year from 1500 B.C. to 2999 A.D. These tables are very accurate, all the way back to the time of Christ and before. Using this book, you can work out the exact time of the New Moons for the relevant months in the years 29, 30, 31 A.D. Doing so, you will prove that *only the year 30 A.D. fits the evidence!*

Using these tables, you will discover that the conjunction of the New Moon for March, 30 A.D., was on the 22nd day of the month (Wednesday), at 17:32 GMT– that is, 5:32 PM, Wednesday evening! This would have been about 7:32 Jerusalem time. Since the conjunction (which is invisible to man) occurred Wednesday evening, the earliest New Moon crescent could not possibly have been seen by the naked eye before the next evening – *Thursday* evening. Normally, the crescent is first visible about one day or 24 hours after the conjunction.

This information means that Abib 1 was a Friday that week, and therefore Abib 14 – the day of the crucifixion – *had to be on a Thursday!*

What does this mean? Simply this: The Wednesday crucifixion theory is just as wrong as the Friday crucifixion theory! Modern astronomy proves it beyond the shadow of a scintilla of a doubt! And the amazing thing is, the Thursday crucifixion theory fits perfectly with both *Biblical and astronomical* evidence!

And take note – this new evidence **FITS PERFECTLY** with the statement of the disciples, in Luke 24, when they told Jesus on the Sunday after His resurrection, “And what is more, **IT IS THE THIRD DAY** since all this took place” (Luke 24:21). Sunday is three days from Thursday – it is only two days from Friday, and it is **FOUR** days from Wednesday!

Why 30 A.D.?

Why was the year 30 A.D. so important? Why would it be the logical year for the crucifixion, when compared, say, to 31 A.D.? Is there evidence, outside of the Bible, that indeed A.D. 30 was the year the Christ, the Son of the Most High God, was crucified

According to Jewish history, preserved in the Talmud, there were *four miraculous signs* which all occurred in 30 A.D. These signs did not occur in 31 A.D., or in 33 A.D., or 29 A.D. or any other year. These signs also point to something very unusual occurring in A.D. 30 which

earned the wrath and anger of God upon the Jewish nation of that time.

In the gospel accounts dealing with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, we find that some weird, bizarre, and strange events occurred, connected with the event of the crucifixion.

In the book of Matthew we read: “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. . . . Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. And, behold, *the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom*; and the *earth did quake*, and the rocks were split; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints that slept were raised, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now, when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:45-54).

The “bodies of the saints that slept” that arose, following this earthquake which accompanied the death of Christ, were the bodies of believers or saints who had *recently died*. This is not talking about Old Testament saints, patriarchs and prophets, but simply men and women who had recently died, and who were resurrected back to *normal, physical life*, and died later. They were temporarily “resurrected.” The saints and prophets of old are still in their graves, awaiting the great day of resurrection (Heb.11:13, 39).

Alfred Edersheim describes the events which occurred when Christ died on the cross. Writes Edersheim in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*,

“And now a shudder ran through Nature, as its Sun had set. We dare not do more than follow the rapid outlines of the Evangelistic narrative. As the first token, it records the rending of the Temple-Veil in two from the top downward to the bottom; as the second, the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks and the opening of the graves. . . *while the rending of the Veil is recorded first, as being the most significant token to Israel, it may have been connected with the earthquake, although this alone might scarcely account for the tearing of so heavy a Veil from the top to the bottom.* Even the latter circumstance has its significance. That some great catastrophe, betokening the impending destruction of the Temple, had occurred in the Sanctuary about this very time, is confirmed by not less than *four mutually independent testimonies: those of Tacitus, of Josephus, of the Talmud, and of earliest Christian tradition.* The most important of these are, of course, the Talmud and Josephus. The latter speaks of *the mysterious extinction of the middle and chief light in the Golden Candlestick, forty years before the destruction of the Temple*; and both he and the Talmud refer to a supernatural opening by themselves of the great Temple-gates that had been previously closed, which was regarded as a portent of the coming destruction of the Temple” (p.610).

The Temple was destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. Forty years before that date would be 30 A.D. -- the year of the crucifixion

In early writings of the church fathers, Jerome in a letter to Hedibia relates that the huge

lintel of the Temple was broken and splintered and fell. He connects this with the rending of the Veil. Says Edersheim, “it would seem an obvious inference to connect again this breaking of the lintel with an earthquake” (p.610, *op. cit.*). The lintel was an enormous stone, being at least 30 feet long and weighing some 30 tons!

The Temple Veils were 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and the thickness of the palm of a man's hand, wrought in 72 squares. They were so heavy that we are told 300 priests were needed to manipulate each one. The Veil being rent from top to bottom was such a terrible portent because it indicated that God's Own Hand had torn it in two, His Presence thus deserting and leaving that Holy Place.

Fate of the Jewish Sanhedrin

This same year, 30 A.D., the Sanhedrin had to abandon the Chamber of Hewn Stones, near the Holy Place in the Temple, which was its official seat or location. This was about 40 yards southeast of the entrance to the Holy Place. In 30 A.D. the Sanhedrin had to move to another location, called “The Trading Place,” farther to the east and a much less significant spot. To be forced to move from a beautiful, gorgeous, awesome location in the Temple to a spot much less beautiful, esteemed, and reverential, must have seemed a humiliating event. Says the Talmud:

“Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin was BANISHED (from the Chamber of Hewn Stone) and sat in the trading-station (on the Temple Mount)” (Shabbat 15a).

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. is 30 A.D. – the very year of the crucifixion of the Yeshua, the Messiah! Why was the Sanhedrin moved in the very year Jesus was crucified? Could it have been forced to do so because of damage caused by the earthquake associated with the crucifixion of Jesus? Was it direct punishment for their complicity in handing Jesus over to the Romans and condemning Him to death?

Prior to the War with Rome, Josephus tells us, the Sanhedrin had to move. They moved to an area outside the Temple complex, in an ordinary part of Jerusalem – actually a place west of the Temple near a building called the Xystus (see Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews*, 5, 4, 2).

The smug, self-righteous members of the Sanhedrin of that time would not have made such a humiliating move – voluntarily! It had to be forced upon them by circumstance. There is no record of the Roman government compelling such a move – they stayed out of Jewish religious life. Nor would Herod the king have been responsible because to offend the entire Sanhedrin would have been a disastrous political mistake. Only a “natural cause” or “Supernatural” cause which men could not remedy would cause such a humiliating move on the part of the Sanhedrin members.

Was the Sanhedrin rebuked by God in 30 A.D., and forced to relocate to a much lesser station and position than that which they had previously held at the Temple itself? Was this due to the vicious, unprecedented wickedness they had perpetrated upon Yeshua the beloved Son of God?

Writes Rabbi Leibel Reznick of this traumatic event, in *The Holy Temple Revisited*:

“Although this was the largest structure on top of the entire Temple Mount, the purpose and function of the Basilica is not recorded anywhere. The TALMUD tells us that when the Sanhedrin (Supreme Court) CEASED TO JUDGE CAPITAL OFFENSES, they MOVED from the Supreme Court chambers to the ‘shopping mall’ (Rosh HaShana 31a). This *shopping mall* was located on the Temple Mount (Rashi) . . . Perhaps this shopping mall was located within the Royal Basilica. Because this area was built on Herod’s extension, *it did not have the sanctity of the Temple itself*, and commerce would have been permitted” (Jason Aronson, Inc., Northvale, New Jersey, 1993, p.69).

Notice! The year the Sanhedrin was moved, 30 A.D., the year Christ was crucified, was also the year they CEASED to judge capital offenses! To humble them, they were reduced to meeting at a “shopping mall” where regular commerce and business of trade was conducted! Their authority was now equivalent to mere buying and selling merchandise! Surely this constituted a withering and scathing rebuke from God Himself who was very displeased with their dastardly treatment of His own Son!

Writes Craig Blomberg of this event:

“. . . the claim that the Romans retained the sole right of capital punishment (John 18:31) has often been termed a Johanine error, especially in view of the counter-example in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58). But this right is strikingly confirmed by a passage in the *Talmud*, which says that capital punishment had been taken from the Jews **FORTY YEARS** before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (pSanh.1:1, 7:2). Stephen's stoning reads more like mob action which defied technical legalities” (*The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, by Craig Blomberg, Inter-Varsity Press, 1987, p.179).

It was 30 A.D. when the Jews were denied the right to perform capital punishment by the Romans. It was this *very year* when the Sanhedrin was forcibly removed from the Temple Mount!

When the members of the Jewish Supreme Court brought Jesus to Pilate, he told them, “Take him and judge him according to your law.” But they replied, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death” (John 18:31). So they pressured Pilate and stirred up the crowd to demand the crucifixion of Christ, the Anointed One of God (John 18:32-40; 19:1-16).

Talmudic Evidence of Christ and A.D. 30

In the centuries following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish people began writing two versions of Jewish thought, religious history and commentary. One was written in Palestine and became known as the Jerusalem Talmud. The other was written in Babylon and was known as the Babylonian Talmud.

We read in the Jerusalem Talmud:

“*Forty years* before the destruction of the Temple [i.e., 30 A.D.] the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open” (Jacob Neusner, *The Yerushalmi*, p.156-157).

A similar passage in the Babylonian Talmud states:

“Our rabbis taught: During the *last forty years* before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the Hekel [Temple] would open by themselves” (Soncino version, *Yoma* 39b).

What is this talking about? Since both Talmuds recount the same information, clearly the knowledge of these events was known by the widespread Jewish community.

Mystery of the Lot

The first of these miracles involved the “lot” which was cast on the Day of Atonement to determine which of two goats would be “for the Lord” and which goat would be the “Azazel” goat, representing Satan the devil (see my article, “Who Is the Azazel Goat?”). During the two hundred years before 30 A.D., when the High Priest picked one of the stones, the random selection was governed by the laws of chance, and each year he would select a black stone as often as a white stone. But for forty years in a row, *beginning in 30 A.D.*, the High Priest picked the *black stone*

The lot for Azazel – the black stone – contrary to all the laws of chance, came up 40 times in a row from 30 to 70 A.D.! This was considered a dire event. This foreboded supernatural evil for the entire Jewish community. This implies that something drastic and very horrible occurred in 30 A.D., prior to the day of Atonement that year!

Mystery of the Crimson Strap

The second miracle was of the crimson strap or cloth tied to the Azazel goat, which up until 30 A.D. had always turned white, remaining crimson. This undoubtedly caused much stir and consternation among the Jews, because it showed the sins of the people which had been confessed over the Azazel goat, represented by the red color of blood, were *still crimson* – that is, they had not been pardoned and “made white.” As God told Israel through Isaiah the prophet, “Come, let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as *scarlet [crimson]*, they shall be *white as snow*; though they be *red like crimson*, they shall be as [white] wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

Beginning in 30 A.D., the red strap placed on the Azazel goat, symbolizing the sins of the people, did not turn white, for *forty years, till the destruction of the Temple itself!* The clear indication is that the whole community was guilty of some great sin in 30 A.D., for which they were *not pardoned*, and their collective guilt remained for every year till 70 A.D. In 70 A.D.,

the Temple was destroyed, and they were taken into slavery and captivity. In 135 A.D., they were forcibly exiled into all nations and forbidden to dwell in Jerusalem any longer. *All these penalties came upon them because of SOMETHING that occurred in 30 A.D.!*

They *crucified* the very Son of God! – the Messiah! Of course, it was all prophesied long ago – it had to happen. He died, for us, showing His own love for us, and demonstrating also the Father’s great love for us! This very act was foreshadowed by Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, and Isaac’s willingness to be sacrificed, called the Akeda by the Jewish people (see Genesis 22).

Concerning the crimson strap, for the previous two hundred years, since the time of Simon the Righteous, this ceremony, though not mentioned in the Scriptures, was associated with the day of Atonement. During the 40 years Simon was High Priest, a crimson thread which he had associated with his person always turned white when he entered the Holy of Holies. The people noticed this. Also, it was noticed that “the lot of the LORD” – the white lot – came up for 40 straight years during his priesthood. The Jews began to believe that these signs showed God’s pleasure or displeasure. They noticed that the “lot” picked by the priests after Simon would sometimes be black, and sometimes white, and that the crimson thread would sometimes turn white, and sometimes not. The Jews came to believe that if the crimson thread turned white, that God approved of the Day of Atonement rituals and that Israel could be assured that God forgave their sins.

But after 30 A.D., the crimson thread *never turned white again for 40 years*, till the final utter destruction of the Temple, when all Temple rituals ceased to be practiced!

What did the Jewish nation, as a whole, do in 30 A.D., to merit such collective guilt?

On April 6, 30 A.D., Jesus Christ was crucified on Thursday, the 14th of Nisan, the day of the Passover sacrifice, and he expired on the stake at the *very moment the high priest was slaying his Passover lamb at the Temple!* He was sacrificed at the very time when Jews throughout Jerusalem, were sacrificing their own Passover lambs. Thus He fulfilled the role of God’s true Passover Lamb (John 1:29). As the apostle Paul wrote: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (I Cor.5:7-8, NIV).

Mystery of the Temple Doors

The next miracle, which Jewish authorities acknowledge, was that the Temple doors swung open *every night of their own accord for forty years, beginning in 30 A.D.* The leading Jewish authority of that time, Yohanan ben Zakkai, declared that this was a sign of impending doom, and that the Temple itself would be destroyed. Says the Jerusalem Talmud:

“Said Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to the Temple, ‘O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said, “Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars”’ (Zech. 11:1)” (Sota 6:3).

Yohanan ben Zakkai was the leader of the Jewish community during the time following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., when the Jewish government was transferred to Jamnia, some thirty miles west of Jerusalem.

Mystery of the Menora

The fourth miracle was that the westernmost lamp of the seven lamps of the Menorah in the Temple went out, and would not shine. *Every night for 40 years – or over 14,600 nights in a row – the main lamp of the Temple lamp stand went out of its own accord – no matter what attempts and precautions the priests took to safeguard against this event!*

The Talmud relates that the four main lamps of the Menorah remained unlit during the day, while the two easternmost lamps normally stayed lit during the day. The unlit lamps would be relit from the flames of the westernmost lamp, which was supposed to stay lit all the time – it was the “eternal flame” always to be burning. Josephus says the whole of the seven lamps burned all night; in the morning four were extinguished, and three kept burning through the whole day (compare Exo.27:20-21; I Sam.3:3; Exo.30:8).

The westernmost lamp was to be kept lit at all times. For this reason, the priests kept extra reservoirs of olive oil and other necessities to make sure that it would remain lit under all circumstances. But during the 40 years beginning in 30 A.D., *every night the westernmost lamp of the Temple Menorah went out!*

Again, the odds against this happening are astronomical. God caused the light from the Menorah, representing contact with Him, and His Presence, to go out after the crucifixion of His only Son on the stake, at the hands of the Jewish leaders and Roman authorities

There is no natural way to explain all these four signs connected with the year 30 A.D. The only possible explanation has to be that Almighty God Himself intervened, to *show* the Jewish nation His utmost displeasure with what they had done to His very own Son!

The Awesome Death of the Messiah Foretold

After 30 A.D., and the death of the Messiah, great trouble and awesome trials began to come upon the Jewish nation. Jesus Himself foretold it. As He was led away to be crucified, Jesus warned the women of Jerusalem,

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (Luke 23:28-31).

Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem of the line of David, as the prophet Micah foretold (Micah 5:2). He was born in 4 B.C., born exactly four thousand years after Adam’s

creation, thereby inaugurating the “Messianic Age,” which the Jews said would be the third period of 2,000 years, from creation. Yeshua – Jesus Christ – came in 27 A.D., preaching the gospel of the good news of the Kingdom of God, precisely 483 years (69 weeks) after king Artaxerxes I issued his famous decree concerning Jerusalem and the Temple (Dan.9:24-27; Ezra 7).

This same Jesus Christ – Yeshua Ha Moshiach – IS, in very truth, and has to BE, the one and only true Messiah!!!

Isn't it about time, after 2,000 years of denying He is the Messiah, that ALL people around the world, FACE THE EVIDENCE? Isn't it time to take a NEW LOOK AT THE FACTS, the IMMUTABLE, INEXORABLE EVIDENCE – and ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH?

For the past 2,000 years, the Jewish people, and rabbis, in particular, have been in denial. Most Christians, also, have failed to understand and to obey the teachings of the Man from Galilee, the Redeemer and Saviour. They give Him lip service. They honor Him in theory. But they deny Him by their works of disobedience to His teachings, words, commandments, laws, and judgments.

Isn't it time we ALL take another look at this prophesied Messiah, and the merits of His claim to the Messiahship? Isn't it about time the WHOLE WORLD takes a good, long look at His credentials – without prior bias or inherited prejudice?

Like Pieces of a Divine Puzzle

All the Biblical evidence, and secular evidence from history, pinpoint the time and year of the birth of the Messiah, the beginning of His ministry, the length of His ministry, the day of the week of His death, the time and year of His death, and the day and time of His resurrection.

Truly, His coming as the Saviour and Redeemer of the world is attested to by MANY IRREFUTABLE PROOFS!

But, as the prophet Isaiah foretold in the ninth century before Christ:

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for OUR transgressions, he was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes WE are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought

as a LAMB to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was CUT OFF out of the land of the living: *For the transgression of MY PEOPLE was he stricken.*

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: *when thou shalt MAKE HIS SOUL AN OFFERING FOR SIN, he shall see his seed, he shall PROLONG HIS DAYS, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

“He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall MY RIGHTEOUS SERVANT JUSTIFY MANY; *for HE SHALL BEAR THEIR INIQUITIES.* Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; *because he hath poured out his soul unto DEATH: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and HE BARE THE SINS OF MANY, and made intercession for the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53:1-12),.

Isaiah could not have described Jesus Christ, and His life, mission and purpose, more accurately, if he had been there himself, at Jesus’ very side, as an eye-witness to His life and ministry!

King David could not have been more accurate in his inspired Psalm, depicting the scene of Christ hanging on the stake, and His very thoughts! David wrote of His suffering:

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax, it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, *they have pierced my hands and my feet.* I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

“But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

“I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the sufferings of *the afflicted one*; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help” (Psalm 22:12-24, NIV).

As Christ hung on the stake, they laughed and ridiculed Him (Matt.27:39-40; Mark 15:29-30). They mocked and gloated over Him (Matt.27:41-42; Mark 15:31-32; Luke 23:35-36). They said since He trusts in God, let God deliver Him (Matt.27:43).

As He hung on the stake, they divided up His garments, and cast lots for His cloak (Matt.27:35; Mark 15:24). They pierced His hands and feet with long spikes (Luke 23:33; 24:36-40), nailing His body to the stake. They had beaten and marred Him so much that He was hardly recognizable.

As Isaiah foretold, “Just as there were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness – so will he sprinkle many nations and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand” (Isaiah 52:14-15, NIV).

As He hung on the stake, He prayed to God, “Father, *forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34).

The apostle Peter, who was literally an eye witness of Christ’s ministry, and sufferings, and death and resurrection, wrote of Him as well.

“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (I Peter 2:22-25, NIV).

Isn’t it about time we took an in-depth look into the life of Christ, and His death and resurrection? Doesn’t He deserve it? Isn’t it time for a sober reassessment of the life and sufferings of Yeshua, the Anointed One of God?

And isn’t it time we turn our hearts back . . . to God?

Estimated Holy Days for 2007

Passover Seder Evening	Tuesday 3 rd April
1 st Day Unleavened	Wednesday 4 th April
Wave Sheaf Offering	Thursday 5 th April -- Omer Count Begins
7 th Day Unleavened	Tuesday 10 th April
Pentecost	Thursday 24 th May -- Sivan 7
The Months of ABIB and IYAR both have 29 days in 2007	

Trumpets	Friday 14 th September
Atonement	Sunday 23 rd September
1 st Day Tabernacles	Friday 28 th September
Shemini Atzeret (8 th Day)	Friday 5 th October

